

**LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (previously presented) A computer-implemented method for determining authenticity of a business partner in response to a request of a user comprising:

(a) receiving a request of a user to determine authenticity of a business partner;

(b) receiving an identity of said business partner from said user;

(c) matching said identity of said business partner to a business data record of a business that is one of a plurality of businesses by searching at least one database for said business data record having at least one data attribute that matches said identity;

(d) processing at least one of said data attribute of the matched said business data record according to a set of authentication rules to determine if said business partner is authentic, wherein said data attribute represents at least one credential of said business partner; and

(e) notifying said user of the results.

2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the steps are automatically performed by a computer system either alone or in combination with a user device via a network.

3. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising: providing a standard template for entry of data for said identity of said business partner, wherein a data format of said template is compatible with a computer system that performs steps (a) and (b).

4. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein said standard template is presented to said user for completion.

5. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein said standard template is presented to said business partner for completion.

6. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein said authentication rules require one or more current transactions with trade references.

7. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising: if step (c) fails to find a match, presenting a registration template to said business partner for registration in said business database.

8. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising: searching said business database for said credential of said business partner.

9. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein said credential is selected from the group consisting of: license, purchase authority, bank account verification, professional memberships and industry memberships.

10. (previously presented) A computer system for determining authenticity of a business partner in response to a request of a user comprising:

a device for receiving a request of a user to determine authenticity of a business partner;  
and

at least one processor for performing the steps of:

receiving an identity of said business partner from said user;

matching said identity of said business partner to a business data record of a business that is one of a plurality of businesses by searching at least one database for said business data record having at least one data attribute that matches said identity;

processing at least one of said data attribute of the matched said business data record with at least one business according to a set of authentication rules to determine if said business partner is authentic, wherein said data attribute represents at least one credential of said business partner; and

a notifying means for notifying said user of the determination made by said processor.

11. (canceled)

12. (original) The computer system of claim 10, further comprising: template providing means for providing a standard template for entry of data for said identity of said business partner, wherein a data format of said template is compatible with a data handling capability of said means for proving and said matching means.

13. (original) The computer system of claim 12, wherein said standard template is presented to said user for completion.

14. (original) The computer system of claim 12, wherein said standard template is presented to said business partner for completion.

15. (original) The computer system of claim 10, wherein said authentication rules require one or more current transactions with trade references.

16. (previously presented) The computer system of claim 10, further comprising: if said processor fails to find a match, presenting a registration template to said business partner for registration in said business database.

17. (previously presented) The computer system of claim 10, further comprising: means for searching said business database for said credential of said business partner.

18. (original) The computer system of claim 10, wherein said credential is selected from the group consisting of: license, purchase authority, bank account verification, professional memberships and industry memberships.